

# CENTRAL SPINE

October, 2001

## FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

Join me in welcoming new members (and add them to your member list):

- ☉ Gundel B, Mesa, AZ
- ☉ Debby K, Phoenix, AZ
- ☉ Debora L, Mesa, AZ,
- ☉ Lois R, Tempe
- ☉ Judy W, Scottsdale, AZ

What do you want to hear on next year's programs? Let Cathy Babcock or me know. Our phone numbers are listed with the other officers in every issue of *Central Spine*. Cathy has convinced Ken Schutz, CACSS and CSSA member and the new Director of the DBG, to speak to us in January about the Garden's future.

Remember the Tucson nursery road trip Saturday, November 3. Tickets for the bus are \$25.00 per person and will be non-refundable unless the trip cancels. We will leave early and stop at Metrocenter and in Ahwatukee to pick up participants.

The Nominating Committee is going about its work. If you have any suggestions for officers or directors for next term please contact me so I can put you in touch with them. If you want to be an officer or a director please step forward. Nominations will be presented at the November meeting. At the Holiday Party nominations will again be read, and nominations from the floor will be taken. If you wish to nominate somebody, make sure that person is willing to serve.

This is a good time to sow almost all mesembs and other plants from winter rainfall areas of Africa, such as *Crassulaceae*, succulent *Geraniaceae*, *Othonna*, *Tylecodon*, and winter bulbs. Mesa Gardens, PO Box 72, Belen, NM 87002, is a good place to start. They are online at <http://www.Mesagarden.com/>. Or, you can try Silverhill Seeds, found online at <http://www.silverhillseeds.co.za/>. They have an amazing number of species available, which they collect in South Africa.

If you order seeds from overseas, do to it soon. The US Department of Agriculture will begin enforcing on January 22, 2002, an old rule requiring a foreign phytosanitary certificate with each shipment of plant material, including seeds. This is going to add \$25-\$50 to the price of EACH seed order from overseas.

This month's meeting features our Silent Auction, a major fund-raiser for our club and is open to members and non-members. Bring boxes to carry home your new acquisitions!



Remember the rules: Bring in your items with a bid sheet for each. This can be a 4" x 6" card or equivalent. Write your name on the back of the bid sheet so the person winning the bidding can contact you for cultural information. On the front of the bid sheet write the name of the plant or item. Under this place columns, one for the name, and one for the bid. Write a suggested first bid on the bid sheet, \$1 minimum. Be guided by the rarity of your plant and how well-grown. Place your items on the tables. Each table will have a timer. There will be some time to walk around looking at the items offered for auction. Then the referee will set each timer and invert a pot over it. Bidding is open. If there is no bid, you write your name and your bid on the card. To overbid you must write your name and bid below the previous bid. Bidding increments will be 50 cents minimum. When the timer on any given table rings, bidding is closed on those items, and whoever has placed the highest bid will buy that plant. The timers will not all go off at the same time, so keep on bidding until all tables are closed. After all tables are closed, any items not attracting any bids may be bought back by the person who brought them in (name is on the back of the card) for the minimum bid. If this person does not want the item, any other person may buy the item for the minimum bid. At this point take your winning cards to the treasurer and pay. We can accept cash or check only. Please bring plenty of change and small bills.

We have been holding two silent auctions each year. Your dues bring in just enough to pay for the newsletter. Library, posters, show judges' gas and lunch, and transportation for visiting speakers come from money raised at the silent auction. Some people have suggested we go to 1 silent auction per year, in the fall, and have another speaker. What do you think? Will people bid more if we have just one auction? Let me know, please. My phone number appears later this newsletter.

Next month's program will not be on the last Sunday, since that is Thanksgiving weekend. Instead, it will be on Sunday, November 18. Woody Minnich will talk on *Mammillaria* of Mexico. Woody has traveled extensively in Mexico, legally collecting many many cacti and other plants in years past. He sells propagated plants with collection data where possible. This is terribly important: under the new Biodiversity Convention, no plants brought into cultivation now (except legally, which is effectively impossible to do) may be traded across national boundaries. In the future, if our government goes on protecting us as usual, they may be impossible to possess without proof of legality. So, you need to keep careful records on your plants—where you bought them, from whom, and exactly when. Woody's plants come with these collection data. If you are looking for anything in particular, especially from his wonderful *Mammillaria* collection, ask him in advance and maybe he can bring plants for you. Woody Minnich, Cactus Data Plants, 9607 Ave S-12, Little Rock, CA, 93543, 1-805-944-2784. I will not be there, though I love hearing Woody speak. I will be travelling in Oaxaca and Veracruz looking at plants and taking slides.

*Leo A. Martin*

## Fall Plant Sale Festival

As coordinator of the Plant Sale Festival, I would like to thank all who helped out at the Fall sale. Your expertise and knowledge is invaluable to the public who come in to buy the weird and the wonderful. I wish to extend special thanks to Jane Schlosberg who makes the 20,000 tags you see in all the pots. This is a boring, tedious, backbreaking, eye-straining (am I being redundant enough?) task that takes many, many hours to complete. Special thanks also to Dana Hiser. She has been working very hard on setting up the succulent tent

All of us at the DBG are extremely grateful for all your generous help.

*Cathy Babcock*

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## PLANT FAMILY OF THE MONTH— FOUQUIERIACEAE

This is a small North American plant family with only one genus, *Fouquieria*, containing only 15 species. All but one are medium to large deciduous shrubs, leafing out at any time when rain is available, then going dormant during dry weather. They tend to bloom once per year, unlike our ocotillo, *F. splendens*, which was named by Georg Engelmann after his visit to our area

on the Boundary Expedition in the 1840s. *F. splendens* occurs from Texas through California and south into Mexico. The other species occur in Mexico; most have short trunks, branches, and are not as tall as the ocotillo.



The family is recognized by the flowers. These are borne in terminal clusters and are tubular, with stamens protruding a good way past the tube. Most species have red or yellow flowers. They are considered adaptations for hummingbird pollination, which is certainly the case with the ocotillo.

The glorious exception is *F. columnaris*—the boojum tree. At one time segregated into its own genus, *Idria*, botanists now consider it not different enough in floral structure to justify this separation. But you can leave *Idria* on your labels; everybody knows this name.

The boojum grows in mid-Baja California beginning about 10 miles inland. Drive south to El Rosario and turn left. Soon you will be amazed. It experiences hot days but not our hot nights. Winter and spring fogs are frequent. Almost all the rain falls in the cooler winter. It is not easy to grow here in the low desert; our hot summer nights coupled with summer rains induce rot quite easily. Just a thousand feet higher, in Cave Creek or at the Boyce Thompson Arboretum in Superior, they grow much more easily. The trick to cultivation in Phoenix seems to be: extremely well-draining soil, ensuring dormancy during the heat of the summer, and adequate winter watering when they make most of their growth. Seedlings will need careful watering all summer or they will dry completely. That said, Richard Lahti, of Arizona Riches nursery (602-569-0614), waters his all year and gets more yearly growth than I thought possible. His property is several hundred feet higher than central Phoenix, and is well north of town, so cooler at night.



The other species come from areas with summer rain and grow during warm weather. None are as frost-hardy as the ocotillo.

Though some of us are using them as landscape plants, especially *F. diguetii* and *F.*

*macdougalii*, we will be worrying about them during the next deep freeze. All the summer growers do well in pots and are often seen trained as fat-trunked bonsai specimens. None are difficult to grow, but they are seldom seen since they are not often sold. This often translates into a high price. Water them during warm weather and let almost dry. If you forget, the plant will drop its leaves, but will grow them back after the next watering. These are slow-growing plants, however,

and I prefer not to let them stop growing even temporarily from lack of summer water. I don't give my *F. macdougalii* planted in the ground any supplemental watering during the winter. It blooms nicely in the spring. I bought this plant at a DBG plant sale.

They are not hard to grow from seed but grow slowly. Seedlings, even boojums, should not dry out completely during hot weather, but should not be kept continually wet either. Cuttings will root with varying difficulty between the species. Nobody gets 100% rooting with cuttings. The best method seems to be to dip the bottom end in rooting hormone, let dry a day or so, and set the cut end just below the surface of sand kept barely damp. Spray the tops with water daily. Take cuttings during warm weather. The cuttings will leaf out before they will root, so don't be in a hurry to transplant cuttings.

Jim Elliott, member of our club and owner of Arizona Cactus Sales in Chandler (480-963-1061 or online: <http://www.arizonacactussales.com/>), has transplanted many ocotillos. He says for best results to plant them at the same level as they previously grew and to not water at the roots for 30 days, but to spray the tops with water from a hose daily, until they resume tip growth.

A little water will run down to the roots but the root zone should not be soaked. They will leaf out before resuming tip growth, so keep up the spraying until the stems elongate a little. Once growth has resumed they can be flooded every 2 weeks or so.

*Leo A. Martin*

*(The *Idria columnaris* photo, to the left, from Boyce Thompson Arboretum is by Rick Bundah.)*

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## OFFICERS & BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Deadline for insertion in the next issue of the *Central Spine*: November 8, 2001. Send insertions to Jim Davis at: [pantenor@dancris.com](mailto:pantenor@dancris.com)

*Central Spine* is the newsletter of the Central Arizona Cactus and Succulent Society.

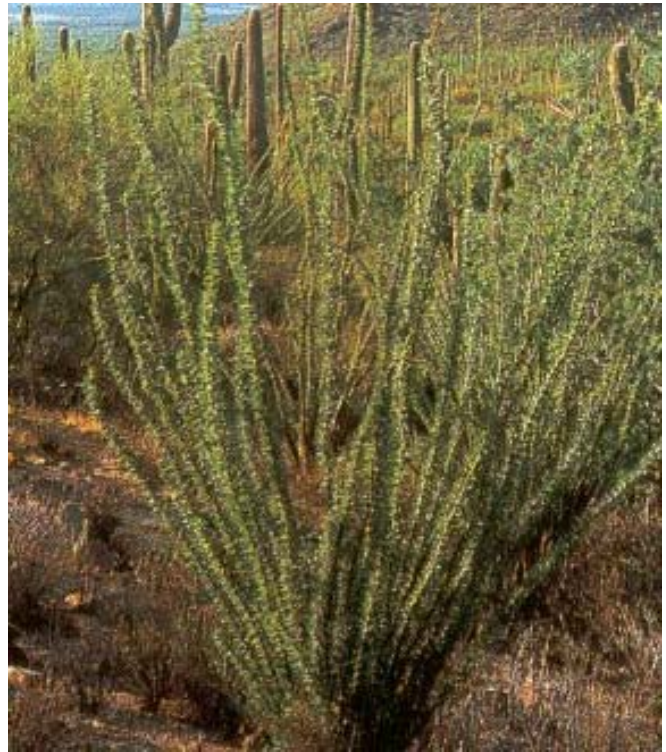
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*All opinions are those of respective authors. Publication herein does not imply that CACSS or any CACSS members agree with any statements published.*

## CALENDAR

- October 28 Silent Auction  
November 18 Woody Minnich on Mexico's  
*Mammillarias*  
December 9 Holiday Party & Elections  
January 20 Ken Schultz, Director of DBG, on the  
Future of the DBG  
February 27  
March 24  
April 3-7 Annual Plant Show  
May 19  
June 30  
July 28  
August 25  
September 29  
October 27  
November 17  
December 8 Holiday Party

**Meetings are at 2 P.M. in Webster Auditorium,  
unless otherwise noted. All meetings include a  
question and answer session on growing plants.**



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